



The Brownfields Initiative: Setting Change in Motion



Before and after photos of the baseball stadium in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Brownfields:

Abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.



Groundbreaking ceremony at the Eco Industrial Park in Cape Charles, Virginia.

What is the Brownfields Initiative?

Since its inception in 1995, EPA's Brownfields Initiative has blossomed into a major national program that has literally changed the way that contaminated property is perceived, addressed, and managed in the United States. The Initiative reflects a new model of environmental protection that creates economically viable, environmentally sound, self-sustaining communities.

Prior to EPA's Brownfields Initiative, brownfields typically remained undeveloped (and often unapproached) because of two critical unknowns: 1) the level of existing contamination on the site, if any; and 2) the often vague notions of potential responsibility for that contamination, should ties to the site be established. Fears of mandatory cleanup under the Agency's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and awareness of a site's listing among the tens of thousands of other brownfields within EPA's Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System (CERCLIS), served as barriers to private sector involvement in brownfields restoration, even considering many of these sites' prime locations.

The Brownfields Initiative has helped to remove these barriers and leverage billions of dollars toward brownfields restoration from the private and public sectors. The Initiative proved that the old "command and control" way of managing contaminated properties was not a feasible approach for managing less polluted sites, and that common sense approaches were needed to help American cities handle their own economic destinies. EPA also learned that neither problems nor solutions are created in a vacuum, and that to be effective, cooperation and collaboration were needed among the entire federal family to address these lesser contaminated sites. The Brownfields National Partnership, now 22 agencies strong, has since become a model for not only increasing efficiency, but for leveraging significant funds to benefit local community efforts.

Brownfields Pilots—Paving the Way

The goal of the Brownfields Initiative is to enable states and communities to work together to assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. One of the primary ways the Initiative does this is by providing small amounts of seed money to local governments, which then create two-year Brownfields "Pilot" programs that build capacity and partnerships at the local level, while developing innovative approaches to brownfields issues.

Brownfields Pilot programs provide cities, states, tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies for brownfields restoration. Pilot programs not only provide initial funding, but offer continued general and technical assistance to help meet cleanup goals. Designed with replicability in mind, Brownfields Pilots encourage information-sharing to ensure that future Pilots will learn from the shortcomings and successes of Pilots that preceded them.

Brownfields Pilots fall under several categories:

- **Brownfields Assessment Pilots** provide funding for environmental assessments and community outreach.
- **Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (BCRLF) Pilots** provide funding to capitalize loans that are used to clean up brownfields.
- **Brownfields Job Training and Development Demonstration Pilots** provide environmental training for residents of brownfields communities.
- **Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)/Brownfields Prevention Pilots** utilize the inherent flexibility in RCRA regulations to prevent brownfields from forming on RCRA properties.
- **Clean Air/Brownfields Partnership Pilots** help determine the potential air quality and other environmental and economic benefits of redeveloping urban brownfields.

New housing development located in Fort Wayne, Indiana.





Revitalized South End District in Charlotte, North Carolina.

“We have seen a significant transformation in the way we view our air, water, and land. Today, there is universal agreement that our natural resources are valuable, not just for the economic prosperity they help create, but for what they add to our quality of life.”

—United States Environmental Protection Agency,
Christine Todd Whitman, Administrator
Senate Hearing, 1/17/01

- **Brownfields Showcase Communities** serve as national models for successful brownfields assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment.
- **Targeted Brownfields Assessments (TBAs)** provide funding and/or technical assistance for environmental assessments at selected brownfields sites not targeted by EPA Assessment Pilots.

Pilot and Initiative Accomplishments

- Brownfields Job Training Pilots have produced hundreds of graduates, the majority of whom quickly found careers within the environmental field.
- Cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields enabled through the Initiative have created thousands of jobs, particularly for residents of disadvantaged communities.
- Of the thousands of properties assessed through Brownfields Pilots, several hundred required no cleanup, instantly returning them to circulation—in many cases, after years of perceived worthlessness.
- The Initiative’s Assessment Pilot grants have leveraged billions of dollars in cleanup and redevelopment funding from the private and public sectors.
- For every brownfield acre redeveloped into residential and commercial uses, 21.4 acres of greenspace are protected.

An Impressive Past and a Promising Future

The momentum generated by Brownfields Pilot projects is outliving the duration of the Pilots themselves—leveraging state, local, and private investment long after federal funds are expended.

Across the country, communities once impacted by brownfields now benefit through local workforce development and job training programs. Environmental assessments conducted through the Initiative have removed contamination and liability uncertainties from thousands of sites across the country, resulting in billions of dollars in cleanup and redevelopment funding leveraged from the private and public sectors. Pilot by Pilot and site by site, the Brownfields Initiative is replacing hopelessness with community empowerment and economic revitalization, enabling disadvantaged neighborhoods to succeed through the opportunities provided through brownfields restoration.

Building State and Local Capacity for Continued Success

EPA’s Brownfields Initiative builds state and local capacity through both funding and technical assistance by:

- Providing financial support to the more than 40 states that have developed voluntary cleanup programs to establish clear cleanup goals and provide liability relief.
- Partnering with states to reduce liability concerns at brownfields sites by entering into Superfund Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with state environmental agencies, to define each agency’s roles and responsibilities at a particular site. MOAs are beneficial to states in marketing their voluntary cleanup and brownfields programs to potential developers and investors because they provide a level of comfort with the potential liability risks under the federal Superfund program.
- Forming effective partnerships with state and local governments to bolster efforts to clean up brownfields sites, remove obstacles to redevelopment, and involve affected communities.



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United States Environmental Protection Agency, Christine Todd Whitman, Administrator

For more information on the Brownfields Initiative and its
accomplishments please visit our Web site:

www.epa.gov/brownfields/

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